BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Nymphas

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: February 28

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IN BRIEF

Saint Nymphas

1st-century Christian of Laodicea, greeted by Saint Paul in the letter to the Colossians.

Feast day	February 28
Born	early 1st century
Died	1st century (unknown date)
Canonized	immemorial cult

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Nymphas

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Nymphas

Saint Nymphas was a Christian of the 1st century, a member of the Church of Laodicea, in Phrygia, in present-day Turkey. Saint Paul greets him at the end of his letter to the Colossians, mentioning the Church that met in his house. We know almost nothing else about him, and some manuscripts even read "Nympha", a woman's name. His feast day is February 28, together with Saint Eubulus.

Who was Saint Nymphas?

All we know of Nymphas fits into one verse of the New Testament. At the end of the letter to the Colossians, the apostle writes: "Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nymphas and the church in his house" (Colossians 4:15). These few words are nevertheless enough to sketch a portrait: Nymphas was a Christian of Laodicea, well-off enough to own a house where a community could gather, and well enough known to Paul and his co-workers to be greeted by name. He belongs to that generation of believers, often anonymous, who welcomed the first Churches into their homes and allowed the Gospel to take root.

Key dates in the life of Nymphas

- **Early 1st century**: Born, at a date and place unknown.
- **Mid-1st century**: The Gospel is proclaimed in the Lycus valley, at Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis, notably by Epaphras, a co-worker of Paul.
- **At that time**: Nymphas becomes a Christian and welcomes an assembly of the Church of Laodicea into his house.

- **c. 60**: In the letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul greets Nymphas and the Church that meets in his house.
- **Unknown date**: Death of Nymphas; the sources say nothing of his last years.
- **February 28**: The day on which tradition commemorates him, with Saint Eubulus.

A Church in a house

In Saint Paul's time, Christians did not yet have churches in the sense of buildings. They met at the home of one of their members to hear the Scriptures and the teaching of the apostles, to pray and to share the Lord's Supper. The New Testament mentions several of these "house churches": that of Prisca and Aquila, that of Philemon at Colossae, and that of Nymphas at Laodicea. The master or mistress of the house offered hospitality and space, and no doubt some form of responsibility in the community. This was probably the role Nymphas played.

Laodicea was a wealthy city of the Lycus valley, neighbor to Colossae and Hierapolis. The letter to the Colossians in fact asks that it also be read at Laodicea, and that a letter addressed to the Laodiceans be read at Colossae (Colossians 4:16). A few decades later, the Book of Revelation contains a message from Christ to the Church of Laodicea, calling it out of lukewarmness: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Revelation 3:20). This verse takes on particular depth for a Church born in homes.

Nymphas or Nympha?

The ancient manuscripts of the letter to the Colossians do not agree. Some write "Nymphas and the church in his house" in the masculine, others "Nympha and the church in her house" in the feminine, and others again "their house". Many scholars today think it was a woman, Nympha, but the question

remains open. Liturgical tradition, for its part, has kept the masculine form. This debate takes nothing away from the essential point: a person of Laodicea opened their home to the Church.

Devotion

Nymphas is honored as a saint by the Catholic Church and by the Orthodox Churches. Tradition celebrates him on February 28 with Saint Eubulus, a Christian of Rome whom Paul mentions in the second letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:21). No reliable tradition tells us about his life after Paul's letter, nor about his death, and neither tomb nor relics are known. No iconography of his own is known in the West.

What can we learn from Saint Nymphas?

Saint Nymphas reminds us that the Church began in homes. Before basilicas and cathedrals, there were Christians who opened their doors, shared their tables and welcomed their brothers and sisters to pray. His example speaks to families, to households that host prayer groups, and to communities seeking to live true fraternity. We can pray to him for hospitality, for small Christian communities and for those who serve the Church quietly.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Nymphas and the novena to Saint Nymphas.

Where to pray to Saint Nymphas

- **At home**, with your family or a prayer group, on February 28.
- **Laodicea** (near Denizli, Turkey): the ancient site of the city where his community lived.
- **In your parish**, reading the end of the letter to the Colossians.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Nymphas for Our Homes and for Hospitality

Saint Nymphas, a Christian of Laodicea in the 1st century, is greeted by Saint Paul in the letter to the Colossians, together with the Church that met in his house. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him our homes, hospitality and small Christian communities.

Prayer to Saint Nymphas

Saint Nymphas,
you who opened your house
to the young Church of Laodicea,
you welcomed your brothers and sisters for prayer,
for the Word and for the Lord's Supper.

Bless our homes and our families.
May they be places of prayer,
where we joyfully welcome
the one who knocks at the door.

Watch over small communities,
prayer groups and fraternities,
and keep us far from lukewarmness,
burning with love for Christ.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Nymphas

- On his feast day, February 28.
- Before welcoming guests or a prayer group into your home.
- For the blessing of a house or a household.
- For small Christian communities and Churches that are just beginning.
- When your faith grows lukewarm and needs to be rekindled.

A short invocation

> *Saint Nymphas, friend of the apostle Paul,*
> *make our homes houses of the Church. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Nymphas from February 20 to February 28, and read the life of Saint Nymphas.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Nymphas

This novena is inspired by Saint Nymphas, a Christian of Laodicea greeted by Saint Paul, who welcomed the Church into his house. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, February 28, begin on February 20. You can also pray it at any other time of the year.

How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and entrust your intention to God. Read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with: "Saint Nymphas, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. Nymphas is known only through one verse of the Bible: the meditations draw on that verse and on the life of the first Churches.

Day 1: A name in a letter

Nymphas appears only once in the Bible, in a greeting from Paul. But God knows each person by name.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for knowing me and calling me by name. Help me to serve you even without being noticed.

Act of the day: Read slowly Colossians 4:7-18.

Day 2: The Gospel reaches Laodicea

Through Epaphras and other co-workers of Paul, the Gospel reached the Lycus valley. Nymphas welcomed it.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who proclaimed your Word to me. Bless today's evangelizers.

Act of the day: Pray for the person who made Christ known to you.

Day 3: Opening the door

Nymphas opened his house to the community. To welcome is already to proclaim the Gospel.

Prayer: Lord, make my heart and my home hospitable. Teach me to welcome without calculating.

Act of the day: Invite someone to your home, or offer help to a neighbor.

Day 4: Around the Word

In the house of Nymphas, the Scriptures and the letters of the apostles were read. The letter to the Colossians was probably read there.

Prayer: Lord, may your Word dwell richly in our homes.

Act of the day: Read a passage of the Gospel with your family or a friend.

Day 5: The Lord's Supper

The first Christians broke bread in their homes. The Eucharist is the heart of the Church.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, present in the Eucharist, make me hunger for you.

Act of the day: Attend a weekday Mass, if you can.

Day 6: A fraternal community

In a house church, everyone knows one another. Joys and sorrows are shared.

Prayer: Lord, make my parish a family where no one is forgotten.

Act of the day: Check on a parishioner who is alone or ill.

Day 7: Not growing lukewarm

Later, the Book of Revelation would reproach the Church of Laodicea for its lukewarmness. Faith needs to be constantly rekindled.

Prayer: Lord, awaken my faith when it falls asleep. Make me burn with your love.

Act of the day: Take a longer time of prayer than usual.

Day 8: Christ knocks at the door

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock": Christ wants to enter our homes, as he entered the home of Nymphas.

Prayer: Lord, I open the door of my life to you. Come in and stay with me.

Act of the day: Bless your home with a prayer, or ask a priest to bless it.

Day 9: The quiet saints

Nymphas is one of those Christians of whom history has kept only a name. Yet they carried the Church of the beginnings.

Prayer: Lord, bless all who serve your Church quietly. Through the intercession of Saint Nymphas, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Thank someone who serves in your parish.

Closing prayer

Saint Nymphas,
Christian of Laodicea and friend of the apostles,
you opened your house to the Church
and welcomed your brothers and sisters in the name of Christ.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Make my home a place of prayer and welcome,
and keep my faith alive.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Nymphas at any time, and read the life of Saint Nymphas.

Credits and sources

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